

Tuesday, September 02, 2008

From the Coeur d'Alene Press

- NIC center offers new classes

From the Spokesman-Review

- College cafeterias dropping lunch trays
- Middle school 101: Tips for survival

From the Moscow Pullman Daily News (password required)

- Public school teachers, students prefer midweek start
- Schools brace for fair-time knife surge
- OUR VIEW: Ed board made bad law school decision (editorial)

From the Lewiston Tribune (password required)

- School's in session at iSucceed
- School officials say missing mark not as bad as it sounds

From the Idaho-Press Tribune, Nampa

- Not all think UI law school should open in Boise
- Lots of double vision at Chubbuck school

From the Idaho Statesman

- Boise's first charter school hopes to buy Franklin Elementary
- Lowell Scott Middle School in Boise assigns seats in cafeteria so no student is excluded
- Open house to feature techniques from "Freedom Writers" movie
- Three candidates to vie for terms on Boise School District Board of Trustees
- Voters approve bond for new elementary school

From the Twin Falls Times-News

- Freshman class starts at Xavier Charter School
- Idaho school gets lesson in multiplication
- Not all think UI law school should open in Boise
- Uncertain times scuttled Cassia school bond issue

From the Idaho State Journal (password Required)

- Plan to open branch of UI law school in Boise faces critics

From the Idaho Falls Post Register (password required)

- Attorney for UI retirees seeks class-action status in insurance suit

FROM THE COEUR D'ALENE PRESS

NIC center offers new classes

Courses geared toward working adults looking to learn something new

POST FALLS -- North Idaho residents can learn how to stretch their minds, bodies and dollars through new classes at North Idaho College's Workforce Training and Community Education Center.

Classes on everything from money management to algebra to yoga are available to the public beginning this month. The center is offering a plethora of classes geared toward working adults looking to learn something new or pursue alternative employment.

Robert Ketchum, executive director, said the classes are good for anyone looking to engage in a learning opportunity. One of the most popular new classes is a personal trainer certification course, he said.

"Personal trainer is one of the hottest four jobs according to an ABC news article," he said. "(The course) has a national certification associated with it and we're seeing some real interest in that."

The courses are proposed by instructors, who are community members qualified in certain areas. Kathryn Hunt, community education director, reviews the proposals, looking for what is most relevant and useful for the community, then interviews potential instructors.

Other popular classes include Certified Nursing Assistant apprenticeships and financial management classes.

Hunt said she can never predict which classes will fill up first, but this time it appears financial classes have taken the lead.

"I think local economic conditions and national economic conditions have a lot to do with it," she said. "People are trying to use what they have in the best way and stretch their dollars."

One new class that teaches people how to save money, and hopefully make a profit, is called "From Bland to Grand."

Hunt said this class teaches people how to make their home more appealing and maximize its potential on the market without spending a bundle.

Also new this fall is an expansion of online classes. Hunt said the expansion is to cater to the needs of a financially-challenged community.

"We're trying to be sensitive to the economic pressure people have now with the increasing gas prices," she said. "People might find an online class more to their liking."

Nearly 200 online courses will be offered this fall. Forty-four of those are online certificate programs including certified wedding planner, paralegal, casino gaming, veterinary assistant and forensic computer examiner.

Hunt said these classes, along with others designed to acquire or improve work skills, are useful for people trying to pursue new employment.

The classes are non-credit and are supported by students, not taxpayers, Ketchum said, adding that they try to provide low-cost classes.

Ketchum encourages people to go to the center's Web site to learn more and sign up.

FROM THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

College cafeterias dropping lunch trays

Associated Press
August 31, 2008

TWIN FALLS, Idaho – Students at the College of Southern Idaho are juggling more than books this semester after the school adopted a "trayless dining" policy in its cafeteria.

College officials say they got rid of the food trays to help conserve water and energy.

Students also waste less food because they no longer have the option of overloading their cafeteria trays, said College of Southern Idaho food services director Tom Koerner.

Before the college removed the cafeteria trays, a 55-gallon trash bin was emptied three times during the lunch period, Koerner said. The trash bin is now emptied just once.

Advertisement

Nationwide, an increasing number of colleges and universities have shed their cafeteria trays to cut down on wasted food and dishwashing loads.

Around the state, Boise State University, Idaho State University and Lewis-Clark State College also ditched cafeteria trays.

Idaho State University in Pocatello quit using trays this school year, said dining services director Debbie Woodland. Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston gave up trays in April, said food service manager Erika Price.

Students welcomed the new policy after they understood the benefits, Price said.

At the College of Southern Idaho, the policy has required students like LaCale Pringle-Buchanan to do something of a balancing act as they try to carry plates, cups and silverware. The

sophomore had the misfortune of spilling cranberry juice on her shirt.

"I don't like it at all," she said. "If you have stuff, you should be able to use a tray."

But nursing student Kayla Ross said she doesn't mind because it will help cut down on the amount of food being thrown away.

Middle school 101: Tips for survival

Josie Ellison, Mt. Spokane; Kelsey Glynn, Central Valley; And Bradley Skalstad, Shadle
August 31, 2008

We understand how stressful getting back to school can be, especially when you are moving up to a bigger school. Having recently "graduated" from middle school, we feel it our duty to pass along some helpful tips that ensured our success and safety — all while keeping it green.

- We must warn you of some dangers, like the whole grain corn dogs. If you pack a lunch, you can easily avoid them, but use a lunchbox and plastic containers that can be reused.
- Did you know that an average toilet uses 1.6 gallons of water per flush? That's a lot of water just to give someone a swirly. We suggest you either dunk two people at once, or spin the victim and refrain from flushing.

Advertisement

- For those of you who like to stand in one place while in the halls, you are a target for pranksters. At least try to stand next to recycling bins as they will be less gooey if you get canned. If you do happen to get stuck in a garbage can, take the time to check for recyclables that people may have absentmindedly thrown away.

Other survival strategies:

- If you get stuck in your locker, use your spare time to knit a re-usable grocery bag, so you don't have to use the plastic ones and you're not wasting any time.
- The good thing about wrestling is that leotards save plastic and spandex.
- Don't bother copying your neighbor, it wastes paper. Just tell your teacher that you would like to use their answers.
- Recycle "kick me" signs. When you are done, pass it on to your neighbor.
- Reduce, reuse, recycle. The gum on the bottom of your desk is there for a reason.

- Recycle old homework papers at the end of the quarter. Hand them down to the kids coming into that class for the next quarter.
- Refrain from using stink bombs, as they are bad for the "learning atmosphere."
- Make sure that the stall has toilet paper before you sit down. (Recycling is not advised).

FROM THE MOSCOW PULLMAN DAILY NEWS (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Public school teachers, students prefer midweek start

By Yesenia Amaro, Daily News staff writer

Posted on: Monday, September 01, 2008

Eric Wegner said it's inconvenient for Pullman's public schools to have a different schedule than Washington State University.

Wegner and his wife, Elizabeth Smith, are both staff members at WSU. He said it's always difficult when their workweek doesn't jibe with their children's academic schedules. That was the case last week, when the fall semester began Monday for WSU and the University of Idaho and public schools in Pullman and Moscow opened two days later.

"I had to take off from work at the beginning of the week," he said. "Fortunately my job allows me to do that, but it puts me behind with my work."

"They are both state-funded," he said of WSU and Pullman's public schools. "I can't see why they don't put their acts together."

Other parents agreed with Wegner, but public school teachers and students offered different perspectives.

Pullman High School art teacher Rob McPherson said he prefers school to start Wednesdays before the Labor Day weekend. It allows students and teachers to build up slowly with a three-day week and a four-day week before their first five-day week.

McPherson said this makes it easier for teachers to settle in and for students to transition to the school year from their summer break.

Pullman High School history teacher Declan Keogh agreed. He said having a five-day schoolweek right off the bat would be harder for students.

Keogh and McPherson said students get tired during the first week of school as it is.

"My sixth-grade class students were tired; they were drained," McPherson said.

Pullman High School freshman Jack Fault said the students appreciate the staggered start as much as the teachers.

"I think it's always good to start slow and then we start getting into our momentum," he said.

Moscow High School student Dan Allen said he also likes to begin school on a Wednesday rather than a Monday.

"It is kind of gradually building into the standard full week," he said.

Pullman High School junior Elizabeth Ibsen said the three-day weekend right after school begins also is useful.

She planned to use the extra time to complete her homework

Schools brace for fair-time knife surge

By Halley Griffin, Daily News staff writer

Posted on: Monday, September 01, 2008

Candis Donicht is dreading fair season.

It's not the cows or the sheep that have the Moscow School District superintendent worried. It's the weapons policy violations that always surge in the aftermath of the Latah County Fair, which opens Sept. 11 this year.

She's not alone.

"It's very rare that we have a problem (with knives), but it seems like the problem happens right after the fair each year," Moscow Junior High School Principal Dale Kleinert said.

Last fall, one junior high school student made the mistake of bringing a newly purchased knife to school. The student ended up being expelled, Kleinert said, because Idaho law dictates that students found with knives with blades longer than 2.5 inches are automatically sent before an expulsion committee.

The Latah County Fair does not allow knives to be sold on the fairgrounds, but Fair Manager Annette Olson said she has no control over vendors who sell their goods off fairgrounds property.

Several students said they are familiar with a distributor who often sets up shop in the nearby Eastside Marketplace parking lot.

"Younger kids always go and buy these intense knives that look pretty dangerous but are very cheaply made," said Travis Streets, a junior at Moscow High School.

Students are well-aware of the rules for the most part, but said it can be easy to forget that they're carrying a knife. If a student goes hunting over the weekend and forgets to remove a knife from their backpack, for example, they can bring it straight to the principal's office without facing disciplinary measures, Kleinert said.

"Yesterday I brought a knife in by accident. I have to take it to work and I just forgot," said Nick Colter, a junior at Moscow High School.

Colter said he went back to his car and left the knife there when he realized what he'd done.

Another Moscow High School junior, Tucker Olson, said he agrees with school policy because there's no reason for students to bring knives to school.

"We're not in a combat zone here; we don't need to protect ourselves against the other students and teachers," Olson said.

Principals throughout the district campaign aggressively to remind students that knives and other weapons are not allowed at school.

Moscow High School Principal Bob Celebrezze said the student handbook's section on weapons is printed in bold, there are posters throughout the school warning about carrying weapons, and parents are reminded in school bulletins.

Colter said he agrees with the weapons policy, even though he likes knives and thinks they are "cool."

"I don't want to get stabbed," he said.

OUR VIEW: Ed board made bad law school decision (editorial)

By Murf Raquet, for the editorial board

Posted on: Friday, August 29, 2008

It wasn't even a punt by the Idaho State Board of Education - that would have been preferable.

There is nothing good about the board's Aug. 22 decision to allow the University of Idaho to offer a third-year legal education in Boise.

UI officials requested permission and the requisite money to offer a full, three-year legal education in the state capital to satisfy the growing need for legal education in southern Idaho.

The UI was the obvious choice to fill that void.

The board in a split decision voted the proposal down and offered up its own version.

The UI wanted to start in Boise with an enrollment of 30 students in 2010 and eventually build that to 250.

The board questioned whether projected enrollment numbers were solid and suggested school officials crunch the numbers a little more and bring the proposal back at another meeting.

Before making its proposal to the board, the UI worked the numbers, studied the economic impact and determined a three-year law school branch in Boise would not affect the UI campus and Moscow in a negative way.

The board did not have to nix the three-year plan. Instead, it should have asked for the amended study to be completed by the board's October or November meeting and reconsidered the proposal when it had the information it requested.

The board, despite what it may have thought, did the UI no favors with the third-year-only plan.

Paul Agidius, an ed board member and Moscow lawyer, was one of two who voted against the board's proposal.

"Third-year students don't just pop out of nowhere, and I think you're going to see these students coming from the Moscow campus," he said.

That's an economic impact we don't want to see.

FROM THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

School's in session at iSucceed

Another Idaho virtual school starts its first semester

Monday, September 1, 2008

Students across Idaho are a click away from the start of their first year of iSucceed, a new virtual high school that will allow them to earn a diploma as fast as their ambitions and browsers allow.

The Idaho Public Charter School Commission approved iSucceed in 2007, and its first semester begins Tuesday.

Tamara Baysinger, program manager for the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, said virtual schools have become an increasing trend, with iSucceed being the fifth virtual school in Idaho that receives funding through the Idaho State Department of Education.

Michigan and New Mexico already require students to participate in a form of online learning. Michigan adopted this requirement into its curriculum in 2006.

"There is still interest in having more virtual schools in Idaho," Baysinger said. "It is very beneficial for some families."

Donna Hutchison is the chief executive officer for the Idaho Digital Learning Academy. The state-funded virtual school created in 2002 by the Idaho Legislature has seen enrollment increase from 700 students its first year to 6,600 students last year.

Unlike iSucceed, which is a full-time online school, IDLA can be used to pick up extra credits or classes that may not be available in certain school districts, Hutchison said.

Not everyone, however, believes virtual charter schools offer a better education.

Sen. Gary Schroeder, R-Moscow, said while he had supported and helped start charter schools in Idaho, he feels additional legislation in the past has relaxed "safeguards," which is causing virtual schools to fail their adequate yearly progress assessments.

He also said an office performance evaluation through the Legislature showed 40 percent of funds allocated to charter schools were not being invested into the students, while the schools continue to make more money sending their bills to the Idaho State Department of Education.

"Virtuals get transportation costs. They don't transport any kids," he said. "Why? Because lobbyists are able to get them to give it away at the Legislature. My concern for charter schools is they don't seem to follow the law."

Schroeder said he understands that some nontraditional students will benefit from virtual schools, which "is good for some kids, but not all kids."

Laurinda O'Dell, of Coeur d'Alene, said she has enrolled her children, April, 15, and Taylor, 17, in iSucceed and is happy to escape the traditional high school environment.

"I have been looking for some alternative to the public school system in Coeur d'Alene for a while," she said. "I fight for my children. I don't appreciate when the schools are too focused on teaching the academics and not teaching the students."

Insight, a vendor and sister company to the University of Phoenix, will provide iSucceed with the learning management system software, ANGEL, where students can choose from 150 educational courses.

"Taylor was looking at the fact that they have graphic design classes," O'Dell said, which is something her son's previous traditional school wouldn't provide until he completed elective courses first. "They have a math course that has to do with personal business and finance - the stuff kids really need, but they wait until they are seniors in high school in other schools."

The virtual high school based in Boise was started by its five board members with the focus of helping Latino students and students with low socioeconomic status, said iSucceed Executive Director Cliff Green.

Students have been provided with a late model laptop computer, printer and scanner, Green said, as well as a \$15 reimbursement per month for Internet service, which is chosen by the students' families.

Students who may benefit from an online education include girls who need to stay home due to a pregnancy, students with a medical illness, or students who have problems with traditional schools that range from bullying to boredom, he said.

O'Dell said iSucceed will allow her children to have full-time jobs that will prepare them for after graduation.

"My kids are working during the days and so am I," she said. "When we get back at night, we can work together. They're not given the distractions of a school room with a bunch of kids who don't care. It doesn't make cookie-cutter kids out of my kids."

Just like students, parents will be given access to their children's accounts, where they can see when they last logged in, how much work they have accomplished and be able to stay up to date on their grades, which are updated weekly.

"The one issue with having a virtual school is we have kids all over the state and we have to find ways to engage them socially," Green said. "We will do the cap and gown ceremony. We will have the prom."

Students will have to take the Idaho Standards Achievement Test in the spring, which will be provided through centralized testing locations, he said.

In three years iSucceed will be working toward school improvements and self-assessments before becoming a fully accredited public school.

The school will operate this year under a provisional accreditation granted by the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools, said NAAS Commissioner Patrick Charlton, who is also an assistant superintendent with the Vallivue School District in Caldwell.

Green said iSucceed has closed its enrollment process with about 420 students, but will be accepting applications for its spring semester.

School officials say missing mark not as bad as it sounds

Some area schools fail federal guidelines

By Kerri Sandaine

Saturday, August 30, 2008

Landing on a list of schools that missed the mark on federal guidelines isn't as ominous as it may sound, say area educators.

"It makes some of us uncomfortable, but a little bit of stress now and again isn't that bad of a deal," said Cary Foster, director of Title 1 at the Kamiah School District. "It forces schools to really look at how they're spending their resources. It helps strengthen our professional development plans, and the school-improvement process really involves parents, which is a good thing."

Washington education officials released a preliminary report this week listing 628 schools and 57 districts that are failing to meet federal guidelines. Two Clarkston schools - Lincoln Middle School and the Educational Opportunity Center - are included on the list.

Eric Price, director of curriculum, instruction and assessment at the Clarkston School District, said the process puts a lot of pressure on schools, but it can be a helpful tool. "I just think this helps us to focus and pay attention in areas that need improvement, and ask what we need to do differently."

Price said Lincoln Middle School made the list because it missed the target in special education reading and math two years in a row, and the EOC, an alternative school, did not meet guidelines because of its graduation rates.

"At the EOC, kids don't have a graduation time line, so it doesn't really fit the K-12 model," Price said. "We are doing great things for kids in the EOC, but we're never going to hit the indicator for graduation rates."

Price said one of the reasons schools failed to meet guidelines in a category or two was because the bar was raised significantly last year.

"It was a huge jump for our schools to be making, and it asked a lot of our teachers and students," Price said. "We do the best that we can with our students. We need to continue to do what we can to have students learning at the levels they need to be successful in life."

Under the No Child Left Behind law, all students in every school must be proficient in reading and math by 2014.

Several Idaho schools in this region did not make adequate yearly progress, according to a report issued by the state earlier this month. Statewide, 75 school districts and 286 schools did not meet the proficiency standards.

Low test scores in one or two categories can cause a school to miss the federal benchmark. That's what happened at Kamiah Elementary School. "We didn't make the target on reading in the

categories of economically disadvantaged and the white population," Foster said. "We are really working to meet those needs in reading."

Educators have predicted that as proficiency standards get higher, more schools will fall short.

"Eventually it looks like every school will be going through the school-improvement process," Foster said.

FROM THE IDAHO-PRESS TRIBUNE, NAMPA

Not all think UI law school should open in Boise

By Jessie L. Bonner
The Associated Press

BOISE — Some of the people who govern higher education in Idaho aren't sure about a plan to open a law school branch in the state capital, and they've also posed this question: Does Idaho really need more lawyers?

They also wonder if the money could be better spent on other needs, such as fixing a statewide shortage of nurses.

The University of Idaho now operates the state's only law school at its campus in Moscow.

Don Burnett, dean of the University of Idaho College of Law, went before the state Board of Education in August and pushed hard to open a branch campus in Boise, where future lawyers could study in a larger city near the Idaho Supreme Court.

The Moscow campus is ideal for some students, Burnett said, but the rural setting is not for everyone.

"It's a small town," Burnett said. "We have locational disadvantages and we want to solve them."

The board didn't say no to the idea, but two members, both lawyers, made it clear that they are far from saying yes.

Board member Blake Hall said he would fully support improving legal education in Idaho, but doesn't understand why that can't be done at Moscow. Opening a law school branch in Boise would take about eight years and cost an extra \$6 million a year to operate.

"I'm concerned about taking limited resources and dividing them between two institutions," said Hall, an Idaho Falls attorney.

Even after the board proposed, and later approved, a compromise to allow the university to open classes in 2010 for third-year law students in Boise, both Hall and board member Paul Agidius still opposed the measure.

"I have been lobbied more heavily on this issue than any other in the past eight years," said Agidius, a Moscow attorney.

The idea of a Boise law school has been batted around for decades.

Sen. Denton Darrington, R-Declo, says the UI law school needs to expand into Boise before another school does. He agrees with university officials who argue a Boise branch would increase law school enrollment and boost the school's reputation.

But Sen. Gary Schroeder, R-Moscow, says he'll make sure the university doesn't get "one dime" to move any part of the law school to a city 300 miles south of the Moscow campus, noting that the Idaho Constitution requires that legal education be based at the University of Idaho.

As university officials pleaded their case to the board, they emphasized that timing is crucial. Concordia University, a private Lutheran university in Oregon, has also set its sites on Boise, announcing plans to open a law school here.

Steven Daley-Laursen, UI interim president, told the board that the proposal was a "top priority" and called the plan "our last clear chance before a private venture fills the void."

"It's a strategic move," he said, "It's not an accident, it's not a fallback."

But the university had a tough act to follow as they brought their proposal to the board on Aug. 21. Earlier that day, the board heard from Dr. Ted Epperly, director of the Family Medicine Residency of Idaho.

The nonprofit group has helped more than 220 medical students complete residencies in Idaho since 1974. Epperly urged the board to help expand medical education in Idaho, pointing out the statewide shortage of not just nurses, but family doctors.

Idaho ranks 47th in the nation in the ratio of primary care doctors to residents, Epperly said. The state has about 400 family doctors and a population of about 1.5 million, which means there's one family doctor for every 3,750 people.

"Not only do we face a critical nursing shortage, we face a critical shortage of family doctors," Epperly said.

Last year, the Legislature tried to help alleviate nursing shortages by putting money toward two buildings, including a \$16 million facility at Lewis-Clark State College.

As Hall flipped through page after page of the hefty University of Idaho proposal to expand legal education in Idaho — a plan that would allow the law school to hold about 500 students, compared to the 300 it has now — he said he couldn't find justification for a law school branch in Boise.

"I just I couldn't find any empirical evidence that there's not enough attorneys in the country," Hall said.

Lots of double vision at Chubbuck school

CHUBBUCK — Students at Chubbuck Elementary have an uncanny knack for multiplication. The school has 14 sets of twins and two sets of triplets. And if that isn't enough, four staff members have twins.

Principal Jann Herdt said in her 15 years on the job, she's never seen anything like it.

"We're close to having a multiple in every classroom," Herdt said, smiling and shaking her head.

Some of the twins have the staff seeing double, especially Dana Westwood, who may have Karma to thank.

Westwood, whose identical twin, Jana, teaches fourth grade in Rigby, has three sets of identical twins in her classes — two sets in the morning and one in the afternoon. She can't tell them apart.

Luckily, since the new school year just started last week, they still wear name tags.

She hopes they don't pull one over on her by switching places like she and Jana did to their grade school teachers. Of course, if they do, there's always the possibility their classmates will intervene.

"Our friends could tell us apart and they'd rat us out," Westwood said, adding that so far, the twins in her classes are quick to correct her when she mixes them up.

Two of the sets are female and the other is male. The boys' parents help by dressing them differently each day. With the girls, however, things aren't quite that simple. One twin in each set wears a pink shirt and the other a blue shirt.

Stacy Haber has triplets in her kindergarten classroom. The girls are not identical, but the fraternal twins look a lot alike, so she's developed a formula to keep them straight.

"Samantha has the freckles. Allison's hair has a little more red tint to it, and Brooklyn reminds me of her older sister, Maryssa, who was in my class a couple of years ago," Haber said.

Identical twins Brittney and Brianne Hickman discovered the thrill of changing places a couple of years ago. Like Westwood, when the third graders switch in school, their friends give them away.

But at home it's a different story.

"Our mom can't tell us apart most of the time," Brittany said. "We don't try to fool her, but she gets our names wrong."

"She gets frustrated," Brianne added.

While eating lunch in the staff lounge Thursday, DeeDee Pattie, a teachers' aide, listened intently as her colleagues recounted their experiences with the multiples.

When they finished, Pattie shook her head.

"I'm glad it's not me," she said, sighing.

FROM THE IDAHO STATESMAN

Boise's first charter school hopes to buy Franklin Elementary

Defunct school would give Anser room to grow. Neighbors want a city park on the land.

Anser Charter School

BY ANNE WALLACE ALLEN - aallen@idahostatesman.com

Edition Date: 09/02/08

Stripped of its portable buildings and emptied of its students, faculty and furnishings, Franklin Elementary School is a forlorn place these days.

Franklin was shuttered in June, and the Boise School District is preparing to sell the 100-year-old former high school to the highest bidder.

Children still play on the playground in the evenings, and the grass is green, but trash is starting to drift into the stairwells, and neighbors report drug users visit the darkened building at night.

But Franklin's neighbors have hopes for the big stucco building, which sits behind mature trees at the intersection of Franklin Road and Orchard Street. They're trying to help Anser Charter

School acquire the building so Anser can move out of its cramped quarters near Downtown Boise and nearly double the size of its student body. They want the city to acquire the land for a park.

Neighbors say their plan would keep the grassy eight-acre lot open for neighborhood children and stop a developer from tearing down the school and replacing it with a chain store or low-income housing.

Single mother Sarah Cunningham, who moved to her house near Franklin last year, is petitioning the city to buy the land for a park.

"I've made it a mission," said Cunningham, who has an 11-year-old son at Longfellow Elementary School. "I want to unify the neighborhood and get to know my neighbors and get the neighbors to know each other, and with the school going up for sale, I want to do what I can to preserve the green space."

A SCHOOL WITH A WAITING LIST

Anser, Boise's first charter school - a public school with greater autonomy than most public schools - says it consistently has a waiting list of 300 children. The 10-year-old school teaches children from grades kindergarten through eighth grade.

Anser is Latin for "goose." The name was chosen because geese have good social skills and stamina. Anser's teachers write much of their own curriculums, and its students do community service and work with mentors.

Directors, trustees and parents want to increase the size of the student body to about 300 from about 200. That wouldn't satisfy all the families trying to get their children in, but it's as big as the school can comfortably grow, administrator Suzanne Burton said.

She said small class sizes, strong community service programs and a tight-knit parent community account for Anser's popularity.

Anser is now uncomfortably lodged in some former racquetball courts near the Bronco Elite gymnastics center on River Street, where dust from the parallel bars drifts into classrooms.

Franklin, with its graceful old high-school-scale gym, wide corridors, sunny classrooms and 56,000 square feet, would provide more room than necessary for Anser, Burton said.

She has her heart set on acquiring the 1905 building. She said little renovation would be required.

"It's practically turnkey," Burton said.

The district won voter approval in 2006 to replace Franklin, saying the school was worn out and poorly located close to a busy intersection with Orchard Street.

HELP FROM THE CITY? MAYBE

The school district hasn't appraised the property yet. The Ada County assessor's office doesn't have an appraisal for it, either, because as a school, it isn't taxed. Many people involved with the matter estimate its value at about \$4 million.

Anser doesn't have that kind of money.

But the school's supporters have raised \$500,000 in a \$1 million capital campaign. Anser doesn't want to say how much it hopes to offer for the school, although Burton in January said the \$1 million would allow the school to borrow up to \$2 million more.

Anser supporters say with loans, they can afford to buy the building itself if they can persuade the city to kick in \$750,000 to help buy the accompanying land to use as a park.

They approached the City Council last month with the idea. While they weren't turned down outright, council members didn't offer payment, either.

Mayor Dave Bieter's office is offering unspecific encouragement.

"We are interested in exploring opportunities for a partnership between Anser and the city," said Bieter spokesman Adam Park. "There are a lot of different ideas."

Using Franklin as a park would increase property values in the area, said Pat Madigan, a real estate attorney for Supervalu and an Anser parent and trustee.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS LIKELY TO GO UP FOR SALE SOON

Meanwhile, the school district could put Franklin up for bid in three months or sooner, said Chris Wendrowski, the district's facilities director.

The district is required to sell the properties for at least their appraised value.

Franklin and other school buildings are being sold as part of a \$94 million districtwide construction and renovation program that voters approved in 2006.

Franklin's sale price will help pay for construction on other school buildings.

"It was anticipated and brought forward to the voters that we would have to sell these properties at highest value to be able to complete our obligation for those promises that were made under that bond, and that's what our goal is to do," said Wendrowski.

Anser's supporters have no argument with that. But they still hope they can make the acquisition happen, and they have strong support from neighbors.

"Anser is kind of an answer to our prayers," said Lorraine Pearlman, who has lived nearby on Phillippi Street for 40 years.

"We don't want to see the school torn down," Pearlman said. "Anser would be the perfect thing to have there, because it's a school. It's not low-income apartments. It's not going to be a commercial area."

NEIGHBOR: I'LL DO THE GARDENING

The local Laura Moore Cunningham Foundation this summer gave Anser a \$100,000 grant for building acquisition.

Burton said loans won't be a problem.

Although Anser's first building improvement loan was guaranteed by a student's grandparents, this time around "we've been wooed pretty aggressively by more than one financial institution," she said.

Meanwhile, parents who are contractors, architects, plumbers and electricians are eager to help refurbish the Franklin building so classes can start there again, Burton said.

Pearlman, who has been gathering signatures on petitions to the city, offered to do the gardening if the city will buy the land.

"I wouldn't have a bit of a problem making flowerbeds. You've seen volunteer gardens. We could do the same thing with our park," she said."

"You've got to dream, that's the thing," said Dave Wagers, owner of the downtown Idaho Candy Co., who has three children at Anser. "If people can get behind it, it can happen."

Lowell Scott Middle School in Boise assigns seats in cafeteria so no student is excluded

Read more stories about education online
Bill Roberts - broberts@idahostatesman.com
Edition Date: 08/29/08

Remember when you couldn't wait for lunch at school so you and your friends could gab about whatever as you sat in the cafeteria?

That's not happening at Lowell Scott Middle School, and some kids miss it.

Lowell Scott began the school year by requiring kids to sit with students from their advisory class — a sort of modern-day home room.

The point: make sure all students are included in groups at lunch and not isolated, said principal Linda Ventura.

Lowell Scott put the plan in place as a follow up to Rachel's Challenge, named for Rachel Scott, the student killed in the Columbine shootings who stood for kindness and acceptance.

"One of her big concerns was that new people need to be made to feel welcome," Ventura said. "A that's what we would like to do."

Ventura said she doesn't know how long the seating policy will be in place. "We are taking it little by little."

Lowell School took in nearly 500 new students this year, including a new class of sixth-graders who are at middle school for the first time. The seating plan is a way to make sure they are all included in groups. The school has 1,100 students.

Ventura said she's had some calls from parents and questions from kids, but the policy seems to be working well.

Allana Hobbs, a seventh-grader, wishes the school would give kids more choice of where to sit at lunch time.

"Sit with our advisory class a couple of days a week, but a couple of days a have a choice to sit at any table you want," she said.

Amber Homer, Allana's mom, sees both sides of the lunch seating issue.

"It is absolutely a great effort starting at the very first of the year when the cliques haven't formed yet," she said. "I think that benefit outweighs the flip side."

But at the same time, kids get little time at school to hang out and talk, she said. "I think it does take something away from the kids that have friends."

Lowell's students typically eat their lunches in about 15 minutes, Ventura said. Then they go outside and can be with anyone they want in the few minutes before classes resume.

Lowell Scott isn't the only Meridian School District school to arrange cafeteria seating for kids. Eagle Middle School began seating kids by advisory classes about seven years ago.

"It was good community building," said LeAnn Carlsen, the former Eagle Middle School principal who started assigned seating.

"We used to start the year out with all three grades sitting in advisory just so kids got to meet kids." Allana said she's made she's met new people through Lowell Scott's seating plan.

"I've become friends with a couple of them," she said.

Open house to feature techniques from " Freedom Writers" movie

Edition Date: 09/02/08

Techniques made famous in the book and movie "Freedom Writers" will be highlighted during an open house at Vallivue Middle School Tuesday.

Vallivue Middle School teacher Carrie Thorburn, one of 30 teachers nationwide selected for the Freedom Writers Institute in August, will discuss the methods she learned with her students' parents starting at 7 p.m. at the school, 16412 S 10th Ave, Caldwell.

Thorburn is the only Freedom Writers Institute-trained teacher working in Idaho. The institute is conducted by Erin Gruwell and her former students, who together wrote the best-selling book, "The Freedom Writers." A 2007 movie based on the book starred Hilary Swank.

The institute trains teachers to engage students so they connect learning to their own life experiences and to larger themes in life.

"I feel very lucky to have been given this training," said Thorburn, who teaches students in grades 6 through 8 who are developing their English language skills. "Just as Erin Gruwell's students experienced a transformation through writing, I am hopeful my students will become equally engaged and empowered."

Some of the original Freedom Writers do motivational speaking and workshops, and Thorburn hopes to raise enough money through dances and bake sales to bring them, and Gruwell, to Vallivue.

Three candidates to vie for terms on Boise School District Board of Trustees

MEET THE CANDIDATES

BY ANNE WALLACE ALLEN - aallen@idahostatesman.com

Edition Date: 08/31/08

Voters in the Boise School District will elect two school board members Tuesday.

Incumbents Janet Orndorff and Nancy Gregory seek re-election to six-year terms. Challenger Jeff Almeida is making his first run for a board seat. The top two vote-getters will win a six-year term.

Boise school trustees set the policies that guide the district. Superintendent Stan Olson and his staff carry out those policies.

This year, Derick O'Neill is serving the remainder of a term left open when Virginia Pellegrini departed last summer to take a job at the University of Idaho. That term runs another four years. O'Neill was unopposed for the seat he now holds, so he will be automatically reinstated to his board seat.

The election is run by the school district, and your polling place might not be the same as it is for general elections. Link to a list of polling places at IdahoStatesman.com.

JANET ORNDORFF

A lot of former fourth-graders might recognize School Board member Janet Orndorff from tours she conducts at the Bown House, a sandstone structure built by Joseph Bown, a farmer who came west on the Oregon Trail in 1862.

Orndorff, 63, a former elementary school teacher, joined the School Board in 1990. She grew up on a small farm near St. Johns, Mich., and attended a one-room schoolhouse. She moved to Boise in 1974. She and her husband's three children graduated from Boise High.

Her Web page is www.janetorndorff.com.

Why do you serve on the board?

I love helping kids. Even when I had a volunteer job that had nothing to do with kids (chairman of a nursing home project with the Assistance League of Boise), I figured out a way to have kids involved. Maple Grove first-grade students practiced their new reading and writing skills by being pen pals with senior citizens.

Since I am passionate about making a better future for all of our children, serving on the board provides me with multiple opportunities to make a difference.

What do you see as some big issues facing the board?

A major initiative will be a strategic planning process with input from parents, school staff and the community. The process will also include an independent, research-based curriculum audit along with an outside review of our special education and gifted programs. We must make this an inclusive process, and the product must have concrete ways for providing a better future for our children. I will use my previous experiences to ensure those outcomes.

Why should voters choose you?

I have been a part of the leadership team that provided the training, resources and support that elevated Boise district high schools to the top 5 percent of schools in the nation, according to Newsweek. Because of my teaching experience, I understand many of the issues teachers face and have provided support in a variety of ways, including the funding of professional development opportunities for our staff.

I have visited and reviewed programs at every school in the district as a part of my ongoing, diligent efforts to make the Boise School District one of the premier districts in the nation.

JEFF ALMEIDA

Jeff Almeida is a software developer at his alma mater, the College of Idaho. He has a daughter in second grade at Shadow Hills Elementary School, and said he decided to run for the Boise School Board after a group of parents persuaded him to. Among other things, Almeida would like to reform the way gifted and talented programs are administered in the school district.

Almeida, 37, a native of Boise, has a master's degree in math from the University of Idaho and said his strong math and science skills and training will help him as a board member.

His Web page is www.backjeff.com.

Why do you want to serve on the board?

I'm a product of the Boise schools; I enjoyed great success while in the Boise schools, and it was the quality of the Boise schools that drew me back when it became time to enroll my own daughter. I want to support the broadest scope of program offerings possible throughout the district, protect the personal freedoms of students and teachers, and align the district with the values that all working families should earn a living wage and have health coverage.

What do you see as some big issues facing the board?

Obviously, the economic "perfect storm" of declining property values, recession conditions and demographic transitions together represent a huge concern regarding the stability of enrollment numbers, service needs and the tax base. Beyond that, we must constantly update and refine the curriculum in a predictive way to empower our students to face the challenges of the current century.

Why should voters choose you?

My background also fills a profound need in the board's composition. I have over 12 years of experience in information technology, both in the private and academic sectors. My own education was rich with science and math, the latter of which included a graduate degree. Thus, I come prepared to confront head-on our curricular needs for additional science and math, and for preparing our students to face the technology-rich work force and life environments they can expect in their futures.

NANCY GREGORY

Nancy Gregory is known for her support of the school district's gifted programs. A native of South Carolina, Gregory has six children and a degree in education that she says helped her as she guided her children through the educational process. She took her youngest child to college at Brigham Young University in Provo last week.

"I have been teaching all my life, particularly in church," Gregory, 52, said. "As a parent, I thought it was my responsibility to teach my kids to think, and then they go out in the world and take advantage of all the educational opportunities out there for them."

She has served one six-year term on the board. She has no Web page, but invites e-mails at negregory@gmail.com or calls at 323-8354.

Why do you serve on the board?

I think it is important for parents to be willing to volunteer at all levels of education, including the board level. The collective perspective of all seven trustees is valuable local input into the governance of public schools in our community.

What do you see as some big issues facing the board?

Addressing the needs of all learners across a wide spectrum of abilities so that all students can show successful results in their educational experience, being wise stewards of our resources and facilities to best serve our community, and being ever-learning as a system to be able to prepare students with skills to match the demands of post-secondary life.

Why should voters choose you?

I bring to the voters many years of volunteer experience in public schools, a parent's perspective, six years of board experience, and a willingness to continue to advocate for children in our community.

My family has lived in Boise for 18 years. We have six children who all graduated from Borah High School. I have a degree in elementary education and have spent many years volunteering in school, church, and community. We are very thankful to live in a community with such a strong public school system that provides quality instruction as well as elective and extra-curricular opportunities for students.

Voters approve bond for new elementary school

Edition Date: 08/30/08

Wilder School District will get a new elementary school as early as spring 2010 after voters on Wednesday approved a \$4.9 million bond to replace 53-year-old Holmes Elementary School, which district officials say is worn out.

The vote was 73 percent in favor. A two-thirds majority was need for passage. Vote totals were 152 in favor and 57 opposed. The bond will cost property tax payers \$41 per \$100,000 of taxable value.

UPDATE

Capital High tennis courts: Construction is complete on a new state-of-the-art six-court tennis area at Capital High, 8055 Goddard Road, Boise. New surfaces are being installed at the four tennis courts in Sunset Park, 2625 N. 32nd St., Boise, and should be completed by Sept. 15.

FROM THE TWIN FALLS TIMES-NEWS

Freshman class starts at Xavier Charter School

By Ben Botkin
Times-News writer

The first ever group of high school students began class this week at Xavier Charter School.

A class of about 25 ninth graders is attending Xavier this year, marking the start of the Twin Falls charter school's expansion into high school education. For now, freshman students are the oldest students at Xavier, but future expansion is ahead, said Principal Cindy Fulcher.

For each of the next three years, the charter school will add an additional grade of high school classes. By 2011, the school will have students ranging from kindergarten through 12th grade, Fulcher said.

As a result, school officials are making plans to build a new facility so there's room for growth.

Because the details are still being worked out, Fulcher said she is unavailable to provide specifics about when the construction work will begin or where the new school will be located.

She expects that more details will be available later this year and described the upcoming construction as a short-term goal that will take place within the next couple years.

As for the ninth grade class, most of the students are familiar faces that attended Xavier as eighth grade students.

"They're the ones that are experiencing the new programs firsthand," Fulcher said.

The charter school opened its doors in 2007 and teaches a curriculum that includes fine arts like music, art and dance.

Fulcher said that having a school with a range of older and younger students has advantages.

"The younger kids have the older kids for role models," she said.

Cole Meyerhoeffer, a 14-year-old freshman, said he enjoys being part of the first high school class because his class is the oldest group of students.

Andrea "Andee" Cervantes, another 14-year-old freshman, appreciates being part of a smaller school.

"Since it's smaller, you get more attention and learn better that way," she said.

Meyerhoeffer agreed that being in a smaller class has advantages.

"You get to know more people," he said. "It's got less cliques and stuff like that."

The school's current enrollment is 295 students.

The limit of students for this year's ninth grade class is 33, and several more slots remain open, Fulcher said.

In the future, high school class sizes could expand beyond 33, but Fulcher said the school also wants to preserve its close-knit atmosphere for students.

"I don't foresee us growing over 66 students per grade," she said. "We want to continue to be a small school."

For more information about the charter school visit <http://www.xaviercharter.org>.

Idaho school gets lesson in multiplication

By CASEY SANTEE

CHUBBUCK, Idaho - Students at Chubbuck Elementary have an uncanny knack for multiplication.

The school has 14 sets of twins and two sets of triplets. And if that isn't enough, four staff members have twins.

Principal Jann Herdt said in her 15 years on the job, she's never seen anything like it.

"We're close to having a multiple in every classroom," Herdt said, smiling and shaking her head.

Some of the twins have the staff seeing double, especially Dana Westwood, who may have Karma to thank.

Westwood, whose identical twin, Jana, teaches fourth grade in Rigby, has three sets of identical twins in her classes _ two sets in the morning and one in the afternoon. She can't tell them apart.

Luckily, since the new school year just started last week, they still wear name tags.

She hopes they don't pull one over on her by switching places like she and Jana did to their grade school teachers. Of course, if they do, there's always the possibility their classmates will intervene.

"Our friends could tell us apart and they'd rat us out," Westwood said, adding that so far, the twins in her classes are quick to correct her when she mixes them up.

Two of the sets are female and the other is male. The boys' parents help by dressing them differently each day. With the girls, however, things aren't quite that simple. One twin in each set wears a pink shirt and the other a blue shirt.

Stacy Haber has triplets in her kindergarten classroom. The girls are not identical, but the fraternal twins look a lot alike, so she's developed a formula to keep them straight.

"Samantha has the freckles. Allison's hair has a little more red tint to it, and Brooklyn reminds me of her older sister, Maryssa, who was in my class a couple of years ago," Haber said.

Identical twins Brittney and Brianne Hickman discovered the thrill of changing places a couple of years ago. Like Westwood, when the third graders switch in school, their friends give them away.

But at home it's a different story.

"Our mom can't tell us apart most of the time," Brittany said. "We don't try to fool her, but she gets our names wrong."

"She gets frustrated," Brianne added.

While eating lunch in the staff lounge Thursday, DeeDee Pattie, a teachers' aide, listened intently as her colleagues recounted their experiences with the multiples.

When they finished, Pattie shook her head.

"I'm glad it's not me," she said, sighing.

Not all think UI law school should open in Boise

By JESSIE L. BONNER

BOISE, Idaho - Some of the people who govern higher education in Idaho aren't sure about a plan to open a law school branch in the state capital, and they've also posed this question: Does Idaho really need more lawyers?

They also wonder if the money could be better spent on other needs, such as fixing a statewide shortage of nurses.

The University of Idaho now operates the state's only law school at its campus in Moscow.

Don Burnett, dean of the University of Idaho College of Law, went before the state Board of Education in August and pushed hard to open a branch campus in Boise, where future lawyers could study in a larger city near the Idaho Supreme Court.

The Moscow campus is ideal for some students, Burnett said, but the rural setting is not for everyone.

"It's a small town," Burnett said. "We have locational disadvantages and we want to solve them."

The board didn't say no to the idea, but two members, both lawyers, made it clear that they are far from saying yes.

Board member Blake Hall said he would fully support improving legal education in Idaho, but doesn't understand why that can't be done at Moscow. Opening a law school branch in Boise would take about eight years and cost an extra \$6 million a year to operate.

"I'm concerned about taking limited resources and dividing them between two institutions," said Hall, an Idaho Falls attorney.

Even after the board proposed, and later approved, a compromise to allow the university to open classes in 2010 for third-year law students in Boise, both Hall and board member Paul Agidius still opposed the measure.

"I have been lobbied more heavily on this issue than any other in the past eight years," said Agidius, a Moscow attorney.

The idea of a Boise law school has been batted around for decades.

Sen. Denton Darrington, R-Declo, says the UI law school needs to expand into Boise before another school does. He agrees with university officials who argue a Boise branch would increase law school enrollment and boost the school's reputation.

But Sen. Gary Schroeder, R-Moscow, says he'll make sure the university doesn't get "one dime" to move any part of the law school to a city 300 miles south of the Moscow campus, noting that the Idaho Constitution requires that legal education be based at the University of Idaho.

As university officials pleaded their case to the board, they emphasized that timing is crucial. Concordia University, a private Lutheran university in Oregon, has also set its sites on Boise, announcing plans to open a law school here.

Steven Daley-Laursen, UI interim president, told the board that the proposal was a "top priority" and called the plan "our last clear chance before a private venture fills the void."

"It's a strategic move," he said, "It's not an accident, it's not a fallback."

But the university had a tough act to follow as they brought their proposal to the board on Aug. 21. Earlier that day, the board heard from Dr. Ted Epperly, director of the Family Medicine Residency of Idaho.

The nonprofit group has helped more than 220 medical students complete residencies in Idaho since 1974. Epperly urged the board to help expand medical education in Idaho, pointing out the statewide shortage of not just nurses, but family doctors.

Idaho ranks 47th in the nation in the ratio of primary care doctors to residents, Epperly said. The state has about 400 family doctors and a population of about 1.5 million, which means there's one family doctor for every 3,750 people.

"Not only do we face a critical nursing shortage, we face a critical shortage of family doctors," Epperly told The Associated Press.

Last year, the Legislature tried to help alleviate nursing shortages by putting money toward two buildings, including a \$16 million facility at Lewis-Clark State College.

As Hall flipped through page after page of the hefty University of Idaho proposal to expand legal education in Idaho _ a plan that would allow the law school to hold about 500 students, compared to the 300 it has now _ he said he couldn't find justification for a law school branch in Boise.

"I just I couldn't find any empirical evidence that there's not enough attorneys in the country," Hall said.

Uncertain times scuttled Cassia school bond issue

The calculus of education funding in Cassia County has long dictated that areas outside of Burley - Declo, Oakley, Albion and Malta - are the key to getting approval for a school bond issue.

Not Thursday. Burley residents turned out in droves to vote against a \$44.5 million bond issue for new school construction and renovation.

Much of the money - nearly \$20 million - would have been spent on projects in Burley, including two new elementary schools and five new classrooms and a science lab at Burley High School.

But in Zones 3 and 4, which cover the eastern half of Burley, the proposal got just 39 percent and 49 percent, respectively.

Higher taxes in a time of economic uncertainty was the reason why, and that reality must shape the district's strategy for the next bond issue election.

And make no mistake, there will be one soon. The Cassia district is loaded with schoolhouses built in the 1950s, and they're falling apart.

But the next proposal will have to be smaller - significantly smaller - and targeted at the most urgent needs: specifically, classroom crowding in Oakley and Burley, and replacing buildings districtwide that are no longer structurally safe.

Historically, Cassia County voters have been extraordinary generous to the county's schools, but as in the rest of the Magic Valley they're cautious about spending today when their livelihoods are in question tomorrow. It was simply a bad time for the School Board to run a big bond issue.

But the needs persist, so it should expect better results next time.

FROM THE IDAHO STATE JOURNAL (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Plan to open branch of UI law school in Boise faces critics

BOISE (AP) — Some of the people who govern higher education in Idaho aren't sure about a plan to open a law school branch in the state capital, and they've also posed this question: Does Idaho really need more lawyers?

They also wonder if the money could be better spent on other needs, such as fixing a statewide shortage of nurses.

The University of Idaho now operates the state's only law school at its campus in Moscow.

Don Burnett, dean of the University of Idaho College of Law, went before the state Board of Education in August and pushed hard to open a branch campus in Boise, where future lawyers could study in a larger city near the Idaho Supreme Court.

The Moscow campus is ideal for some students, Burnett said, but the rural setting is not for everyone.

"It's a small town," Burnett said. "We have locational disadvantages and we want to solve them."

The board didn't say no to the idea, but two members, both lawyers, made it clear that they are far from saying yes.

Board member Blake Hall said he would fully support improving legal education in Idaho, but doesn't understand why that can't be done at Moscow. Opening a law school branch in Boise would take about eight years and cost an extra \$6 million a year to operate.

"I'm concerned about taking limited resources and dividing them between two institutions," said Hall, an Idaho Falls attorney.

Even after the board proposed, and later approved, a compromise to allow the university to open classes in 2010 for third-year law students in Boise, both Hall and board member Paul Agidius still opposed the measure.

"I have been lobbied more heavily on this issue than any other in the past eight years," said Agidius, a Moscow attorney.

The idea of a Boise law school has been batted around for decades.

Sen. Denton Darrington, R-Declo, says the UI law school needs to expand into Boise before another school does. He agrees with university officials who argue a Boise branch would increase law school enrollment and boost the school's reputation.

But Sen. Gary Schroeder, R-Moscow, says he'll make sure the university doesn't get "one dime" to move any part of the law school to a city 300 miles south of the Moscow campus, noting that the Idaho Constitution requires that legal education be based at the University of Idaho.

As university officials pleaded their case to the board, they emphasized that timing is crucial. Concordia University, a private Lutheran university in Oregon, has also set its sights on Boise, announcing plans to open a law school here.

Steven Daley-Laursen, UI interim president, told the board that the proposal was a "top priority" and called the plan "our last clear chance before a private venture fills the void."

"It's a strategic move," he said, "It's not an accident, it's not a fallback."

But Hall said he couldn't find justification for a law school branch in Boise.

"I just couldn't find any empirical evidence that there's not enough attorneys in the country," Hall said.

FROM THE IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Attorney for UI retirees seeks class-action status in insurance suit

MOSCOW (AP) -- The University of Idaho has yet to admit or deny allegations made by retirees who are suing the school over health insurance benefits.

An attorney representing the former employees filed the lawsuit June 28.

Retirees say the university violated early retirement agreements signed in 1999 and 2002, reneging on a deal not to make them pay health insurance premiums. The university had 20 days to respond to the lawsuit and admit or deny the claims.

But general counsel for the university didn't file a notice of appearance in district court until Aug. 11.

UI spokeswoman Tania Thompson said the university fully intends to respond to the lawsuit at the "appropriate time."

Attorney Ron Landeck is representing the retirees and says he won't ask a judge to impose the deadline. Landeck is working with university attorneys to attain class-action status.

Landeck says the university made changes to the retirement agreements of about 268 former employees.